

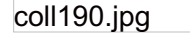
# The Bin Ladens: meet the family

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/04/21/the-bin-ladens-meet-the-family/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/04/21/the-bin-ladens-meet-the-family/)


2008-4-21

It is now one of the most notorious names in recent history, but the Bin Ladens are interesting for more than producing Osama, America's No 1 Enemy. They also represent the tensions within modern Islam and especially the Saudi version of it. Pulitzer prize-winner [Steve Coll](#) has now [written](#) the most comprehensive and stimulating history of the Bin Laden clan and on [Thursday](#) he talks about them at [Polis](#).



 You can get a flavour of Steve talking about the book on [YouTube](#) and how he first came across the Bin Ladens before 9/11 while working at the Washington Post. [Coll](#) was a reporter and managing editor for the Post, he has been a correspondent in Afghanistan and written other brilliantly-researched books on contemporary history.

The story of the Bin Ladens is very much the narrative of the rise of the patriarch Mohamed from illiterate poverty to mega-riches as Saudi Arabia spent its oil-wealth. His family became pro-Western, revelling in the consumer goods, culture and technology of America and Europe. Many of his children still are. But it also retained a strong allegiance to the strict version of Islam that evolved in 20th century Saudi Arabia. And that gives some clues to the mind of the man that this book is really about: Osama Bin Laden.

 In his description of OBL, Coll is careful not to resort to the dramatic mythologising that the Bush White House and some international media has fallen prey to. There is a lack of factual evidence about OBL and Coll refuses to fill the vacuum with speculation or fantasy. Instead there is lots of circumstantial detail and an attempt to understand the man through his own pronouncements, ritualistic as they are.

Of course, this is a US view, (In its US edition it is subtitle "An Arabian Family in the American Century") so it will be interesting to see what the British public make of Coll and his take on the family who found themselves at the heart of the so-called 'War On Terror' or 'Clash Of Civilisations.'

Come along to hear Coll and put your own questions at the Old Theatre, Houghton Street on Thursday April 24th at 6.30pm. It's free and no tickets are needed. Email [polis@lse.ac.uk](mailto:polis@lse.ac.uk) if you want to reserve a place.



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